

WHAT'S *New*

in the Metropolitan Police Department



*A weekly update for residents, visitors, and workers
in the District of Columbia*

Friday, October 28, 2005

CHIEF TESTIFIES ON NEED FOR GREATER SHARING OF JUVENILE JUSTICE INFORMATION

Chief Ramsey told Congressional leaders this week that DC is making headway in combating juvenile crime, but that the MPDC still needs access to more information about juvenile offenders if officers are to be more effective in fighting crime. In testimony before the House Government Reform Committee, Ramsey said the issue of information sharing has come into focus with the recent murder of Marcell Merritt, a 16 year old who had been in the juvenile justice system for years and was being sought as an absconder at the time of his murder. "When young offenders are assigned to group homes or given home detention, I feel strongly that our police officers have a right to know who those young people are, where they have been sent, what their juvenile history is, and any conditions on their release, such as curfews, stay-away orders and the like," Ramsey said. Currently, this information is considered part of the "social files" on the juveniles and is, therefore, not accessible to the police. He also argued that police should be informed immediately when juveniles abscond from any facility in the juvenile justice system and when there is any change in a juvenile's status. "In the interest of protecting our communities – and, as in the case of Marcell Merritt, protecting young people themselves – our police officers should have access to basic and limited information about juvenile offenders in our neighborhoods," Ramsey said.

- ① Read the Chief's full statement at:
http://mpdc.dc.gov/mpdc/cwp/view,a,1247,q,558400,mpdcNav_GID,1543.asp
- ① Ramsey reported that the number of juveniles murdered in DC has dropped sharply this year, from 23 at this time in 2004, to 10 so far in 2005.

FBI-MPDC TASK FORCE INVESTIGATION LEADS TO INDICTMENTS IN NORTHEAST COCAINE TRAFFICKING OPERATION

Area law enforcement officials announced this week that a federal grand jury has charged nine individuals with conspiracy to distribute and possess with intent to distribute cocaine and cocaine base in DC and Maryland. The operation grew out of a long-term investigation conducted by the Safe Streets Task Force, a joint FBI and MPDC task force that has been targeting the narcotics trade and related violence in Northeast DC. Seven of the nine individuals charged were arrested following the execution of search warrants in nine different locations in DC and Maryland. One of the locations, the Levels nightclub, located at 1960 Montana Avenue, NE, is owned by defendant Antoine Jones. The search warrants resulted in the seizure of more than 97 kilograms of cocaine, three kilograms of cocaine base, several firearms and more than \$900,000 in cash. In announcing the indictments, US Attorney Kenneth Wainstein and Michael Mason, Assistant Director in Charge of the Washington Field Office of the FBI, praised the work of the Safe Streets Task Force, and specifically commended MPDC Detectives Norman Horne and Steven Kirschner and FBI Special Agents Stephanie Yanta and Kellie O'Brien.

- ① Read the news release at:
http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/dc/Press_Releases/2005_Archives/Oct_2005/05389.html

CHIEF SEEKS CLARITY FROM DC COUNCIL ON ENFORCEMENT OF DRUNK DRIVING LAWS

Testifying before two separate DC Council committees, Chief Ramsey this week expressed concern that recent media reports and emergency Council action may be causing confusion among police officers and the public regarding DC's drunk driving laws. The Council recently passed emergency legislation that would change the presumptive value in court of Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) evidence in DUI (or Driving Under the Influence) cases. DUI applies to drivers whose BAC is below .08 – the standard for Driving While Intoxicated (DWI) – but who demonstrate other signs of being impaired, such as failing a Standard Field Sobriety Test. According to testimony by DC Attorney General Robert Spagnoletti, the legislation would not alter the ability of police officers to arrest suspected impaired drivers whose BAC registers below .08, as long as there are other signs of impairment. Chief Ramsey, however, expressed concern that the public would now interpret the law to mean that, as long as a driver's BAC is below .08, he or she is not subject to arrest. "Unless I am misreading either the letter or the intent of the emergency legislation, that is not the case. Regardless of BAC readings, officers can still arrest drivers who show signs of impairment and who meet probable cause standards," Ramsey said. The Chief added, "we need to broaden our thinking from a narrow focus on a single factor – Blood Alcohol Concentration – and instead consider the larger issue of impairment," including drug-impaired drivers. The Chief said police officers need clear direction from the Council on how to handle suspected impaired drivers whose BAC level is below .08.

PHOTO ENFORCEMENT DATA RELEASED FOR SEPTEMBER

Even with a record number of vehicles passing through photo radar enforcement zones during September, the rate of aggressive speeding remained very low, the latest program data show. Of the 1.76 million vehicles monitored by photo radar during the month, just under 56,000 – or about 3.2 percent – were found to be traveling above the threshold speed established for the program. The increase in vehicles monitored during September was largely the result of the deployment of additional stationary cameras. Since the summer of 2001, aggressive speeding on DC roadways monitored by photo radar has been dramatically reduced – from almost 1 in 3 motorists at the beginning of the program to about 1 in 33 motorists in recent months. Average speeds on DC roadways continue to be substantially lower today than they were when the program began four years ago. On streets with a 25-mph speed limit, the average speed of all vehicles monitored by photo radar was 24.6 mph in September 2005, down from 35.5 mph in July 2001. The incidence of red-light running also continues to be substantially lower at intersections equipped with safety cameras. At the 49 intersections combined, red-light violations are down by 62.5 percent over the course of the program. That is equivalent to 26,000 fewer red-light running violations a month.

NEWS & NOTES

National Night Out Honors. DC has once again been recognized for its outstanding celebration of National Night Out. The District placed sixth among large cities nationwide in the 2005 NNO awards competition. Chief Ramsey congratulates all MPDC members and our partners in the community for another exemplary crime prevention event. Details at <http://www.natw.org/nno/award.html>.

Chief Ramsey on News Channel 8, WTOP. Chief Ramsey discusses public safety issues with the public during two media appearances in the upcoming week. On Wednesday, November 2, from 4-5 pm, the Chief appears on News Channel 8's "News Talk" program, hosted by Bruce DuPuyt. Then on Thursday, November 3, from 10-11 am, the Chief has his regular monthly "Ask the Chief" appearance on WTOP radio.

- ① Read his full statement at:
http://mpdc.dc.gov/mpdc/cwp/view,a,1247,q,558358,mpdcNav_GID,1543.asp
- ① For information on drunk driving laws and penalties in DC, see:
http://mpdc.dc.gov/mpdc/cwp/view,a,1240,q,547858,mpdcNav_GID,1552,mpdcNav_|.asp
- ① Halloween revelers who have had too much to drink can get free cab rides home on October 29-31, thanks to the SoberRide program. Details at:
<http://www.soberride.com/>
- ① For the latest results on photo radar, visit:
http://mpdc.dc.gov/mpdc/cwp/view,a,1240,q,548110,mpdcNav_GID,1552,mpdcNav_|.asp
- ① Details on intersection safety cameras are at:
http://mpdc.dc.gov/mpdc/cwp/view,a,1240,q,547886,mpdcNav_GID,1552,mpdcNav_|.asp

DATA BOX

Homicides	as of 10/28/05
◆ 2005: 158	
◆ 2004: 165	
◆ % Change: -4.2%	
◆ Closure Rate: 55.1% (87 closures)	
Adult Arrests	week end. 10/22/05
◆ Total: 826	
◆ Drugs: 127	
◆ Weapons: 27	
◆ Robbery: 6	
◆ Prostitution/Sex Offenses: 21	
Juvenile Activity	week end. 10/22/05
◆ Arrests: 59	
◆ Curfew Violations: 52	
◆ Truants: 144	
Firearm Recoveries	as of 10/26/05
◆ October: 175	
◆ 2005 Total: 1,965	
Traffic Fatalities	as of 10/28/05
◆ 2005: 37	
◆ 2004: 40	
◆ % Change: -7.5%	

Information, ideas, or comments about this service? Send an e-mail to **KEVIN MORISON**, MPDC's Director of Corporate Communications, at kevin.morison@dc.gov. Would you like to have this information e-mailed to you? Just go to our Website and register with Crimereports.com.

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